

## ***PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION REPORT***

FOR SOUTHERN DISTRICT SPRING MEETING – MAY 2022

1000 people took the opportunity to participate in 2022's Advocacy Day. You didn't even have to leave home again this year. A wonderful thing about virtual is that if you could not participate on the day, you can watch the event after it's over, provided you were registered.

We as volunteers have a great opportunity to be part of issues that face our hospitals through advocacy. As volunteers in health care, we realize how important it is to have a hospital or any health services available in our communities. The stress on these systems became very evident over these past 2 years.

***WORKFORCE SHORTAGE*** WHA's [2022 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report](#) shows that an aging workforce, a spike in worker departures due to nationwide employment disruption (the "Great Resignation") created unprecedented vacancy rates in health care professions in 2021. The combination of the Silver Tsunami, the Great Resignation, and a pandemic that pushed hospital occupancy to its limit resulted in an increase in vacancies in 13 of 17 professions tracked. The report stated registered nurse vacancy rates were the highest they have been since 2005. Workforce remains a primary challenge for health systems and hospitals. Lawmakers must continue to re-evaluate existing regulatory barriers to practice in Wisconsin, licensure requirements, scope-of-practice requirements, and general Medicaid payment requirements.

***POST ACUTE CARE*** Underlying problems worsened as health care providers were in the middle of an overwhelmed public health and social support systems fighting the spread of this virus. Lack of post-acute care became a critical issue, with hundreds and hundreds of patients waiting discharge to a post-acute care setting (up to 600 statewide in the fall of 2021). The workforce continued to care for patients that no longer needed hospital care but could not find a nursing home for discharge, meanwhile other patients waited for care. Wisconsin needs reform on existing regulations that severely limit hospitals from creating their own post-acute care capacity. Lawmakers need to provide hospitals with the flexibility to create post-acute care options for their patients,

***WORKPLACE VIOLENCE*** Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems depend on over 100,000 employees, providers, and other staff, to care for patients and deliver high quality health care. Over the last decade, health care workers have experienced increases in violence and threats from patients and family members. Through HEAT responses urging legislators to support a bill against workplace violence, the legislature passed AB 960 making threats or violence against a health care worker a Class H felony. The bill was signed by Governor Evers on March 23.

Always get the latest news and updates by visiting [wha.org](http://wha.org). You can be involved with problems facing our health care facilities and providers by being a member of HEAT. Staying informed of issues facing hospitals and healthcare facilities, and contacting legislators regarding these, gives us a part in insuring our hospitals continue to effectively provide care to all in our communities. If you are not yet a member of HEAT, please do not wait to sign up.

Report done by Sherry Jelic